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some friends to dinner, and the missus's cousin is a-coming with 'er fiancé! Of course, what do it matter to you?"

"However she had to put up with the presence of the workman—he assured her that he had been sent by the express instructions of her mistress to attend to the gas.

"The leakage was in a pretty little dining-room. It was only divided by a thin partition from another room in which two persons were talking.

"Ah, pauvre petite, you are tired! Never mind now why I want so many notes changed and never allow you to spend gold and silver! Remember our dinner-party to-night!"

"This was said in a low soothing voice—the voice of a man born to cozen women. The workman was listening intently.

"Well, well, dear!" the man went on. "Don't you know that on the Continent we can't change notes easily? Why, what a time we shall have! We shall have to play the roles of an old staid couple in the presence of the bride and bridegroom!"

"Whew," whistled the workman—"a marriage!"

"Reely now," said the supercilious housemaid a minute later—"you can't finish the job to-night, eh? You must go and get some piping? Well, of all the haggard creatures—"

"And the angry little Cockney shut the door with a clang.

"Tell the gov'nor we want to see him!" said the Inspector, in a quiet assuring tone, to the housemaid at No. 61. "We sha'n't keep him a second."

"We had followed the girl to the

dining-room. The handsome man whom I had seen in the cab stood before us, framed by the doorway.

"I arrest you," said the Inspector, 'on suspicious of having passed a number of forged notes on the Bank of England!"

"There was an exclamation from the inner room followed by a scuffling noise. Evidently a confederate was about to bolt. I bounded into the room, followed a retreating form into a second apartment, and caught him as he rushed into the passage leading to the lift.

"I brought him to the Inspector. A woman confronted me like a pythoness.

"You liar and blackguard, Richard Morrison! That man never circulated forged notes! He is my husband—an honorable gentleman! If notes were passed, I passed them."

"Good heavens! The author of this self-accusation was my sister Rose!"

"Oh Richard," wailed a woman at my feet, "don't hurt him—don't kill me! We were to be married the day after to-morrow!"

"I staggered back. This was Ethel—my Ethel! The man I had caught was Hugh Maitland. He was to have been her husband.

"They were two of the greatest scoundrels, sir, who ever played upon the credulity of women. They are now expiating their crime in Portland.

"And what of Rose and Ethel? Providence only knows. I am an outcast from their affection—a traitor, the ruiner of their happiness, the man who has wrecked the careers of two heroes. Do you wonder, sir, that crime investigation has no longer any romance for me?"

Before and After Taking.

By LUKE SHARP.



IS there a person living in this village by the name of Jeremiah Bolton?" asked the stranger of Hiram Stiggins, who was sitting on the top rail of the fence.

"He doesn't live here," said Hiram, a good deal of emphasis on the word.

"I have a letter from him and he gave this place as his address." "Oh, it's his address all right enough. We don't call Jerry's existence living, you know. He vegetates. And if you want to collect any money from him, let me give you a pointer or two that'll save you some trouble. You just go back where you came from and wait till Jerry sends it. You'll get the cash just as quick that way as by bothering him about it. Jerry's the alfredest loafer in the hull country, and that's saying a good deal, for I know most of the folks in the neighborhood. I've lived here myself goin' on twenty-four year. Some of 'em are spleeny enough, and these times a man has to be up and doin' ef he wants to pay his debts, let alone gittin' credit for makin' more. Times ain't what they used to be. I remember nineteen year ago this spring when—"

"What is Mr. Bolton's business? He is a mechanic, isn't he?"

"Jerry? He ain't got no business—never had. I tell him he's got no business to live. Beats me what such men are made for in the first place. Natural born loafer, Jerry is. Yes, sir. Work? When you see Jerry Bolton tackle honest work, you look out fer the judgment day the week after. The world will be comin' to an end, sure. Why last harvest—I own this farm joinin' the village—and men were mighty scarce, I come over to get Jerry to help me with the hayin'—offered him good pay—a man can get anything he likes in hayin' nowadays. Tain't like what it used to be. Seems as ef the more machinery we get on a farm the more work there is to do. Labor savin', they call them. Labor makin' is more like it. I remember sixteen years ago last harvest that we—"

"Wouldn't Jerry work?"

"Not by a long chalk. Needed the money, too. His wife was doin' the

washin' for the village to keep the children and Jerry alive. As fer the rent, they never thought o' payin' no rent. I own the house he lives in and I suppose Jerry thought I would take it out in rent ef he came to work. Still, that's flatterin' Jerry. He hain't sense enough to be afraid I'd apply his wages on his rent. He's just good for nothin'. He's a tinkerer, Jerry is. Allus workin' at some new fangled thing that ain't no good to any livin' creature. Jack of all trades and good at none, I tell him. Trusts Providence and his wife mostly. Jerry would have starved long ago if it wasn't for that woman. She's a sight too good for him. But she's just as big a fool as Jerry, for she believes he'll do somethin' someday. She's the only one creature on earth that does, but that don't make no difference to her. She's a faded, washed-out creature, and the only time she flares up is when some one tells the truth about Jerry and she hears it. Jest like a woman, you know. There's no accountin' fur 'em. Many a woman with a good, hard-workin' husband don't appreciate him. There's my wife, fur instance—"

"What does he tinker at, principally?"

"Who? Jerry? Oh, Lord knows. Some fool thing or 'nuther. Deacon Swipes says its perpetual motion, but I tell the deacon there's no motion, perpetual or otherwise, about Jerry. Perpetual dum foolishness, I call it. Tryin' to get a livin' by the sweat of somebody else's brow. I tell 'em down in the village that Jerry's a smarter man than any of us 'cause he can live without work and we can't. Time was in this country when a man had to work or starve. Things ain't what they used to be with the young folks all wantin' to clerk in the city. I remember twenty-one years ago when—"

"Then how does he manage to live?"

"I tell you he don't live; he vegetates, and on my vegetables, too, mostly. Only the other day Miss Bolton, she came to our place with a basket and said she wanted to borrow a basket of potatoes. I says to her, Miss Bolton, you can't borrow nothin'. I'll give you a basket of potatoes, if you go out and dig 'em. But I'm no such dum fool as to lend anything to the Bolton family. Thep she ups and cries and my wife she says—well, that's neither here nor there. Some women don't know when

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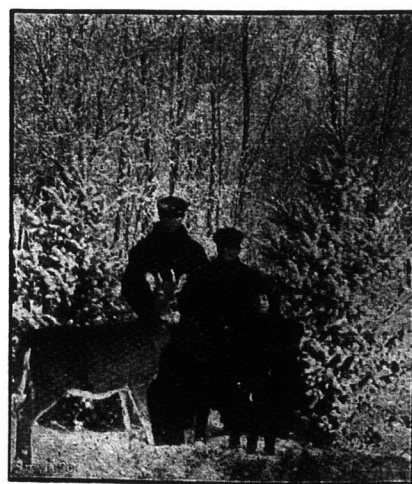
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